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SUBJECT: ISRAEL MEDIA REACTION

SUBJECTS COVERED IN THIS REPORT:

1. Mideast
2. U.S.-Israel Relations

Key stories in the media:

The media cited President Shimon Peres's satisfaction over his meeting with President Obama last night. Media quoted the office of the White House Press Secretary as saying that the present moment

presents an opportunity to achieve our countries' shared goal of peace and security for Israel and all of its neighbors. The President looks forward to his meeting with Prime Minister Netanyahu later this month.Q HaQaretz reported that Peres hinted that Netanyahu would sign on to a two-state solution, saying he did not hear the PM express himself against such a plan. The Jerusalem Post reported that, in his Washington meetings, Peres found broad agreement on Iran. HaQaretz stressed a remark Peres made to Obama: QAs Jews we cannot help but compare Iran with Nazi Germany.Q Israel Radio reported that Peres told Obama that he is not opposed to the United StatesQ engagement with Iran. However, Maariv stressed the growing U.S. pressure on Israel. The media reported that, in his address to the AIPAC conference -- in which he said that the two-state solution was the only option -- and his talks with Peres, Vice President Joseph Biden asked Israel to refrain from building new settlements and dismantle outposts. Leading media (banner in Yediot) quoted Assistant Secretary of State for Verification, Compliance, and Implementation Rose Gottemoeller as saying yesterday that India, Pakistan, North Korea and Israel should join the nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty. Israel Radio reported that the U.S. is not going to force Israel to do so. Yediot quoted a former Foreign Ministry official as saying that the U.S. announcement is surprising and worrisome and that the QAmericans have never said such a thing in the past.

Yediot and other media reported that Netanyahu will offer the Palestinians Qself-rule,Q as the two-state solution is Qnot feasibleQ at this time.

The media reported that Hamas rejected NetanyahuQs overtures in the speech he delivered to the AIPAC conference. Maariv quoted Israeli defense sources as saying that the time has come for an official period of calm with Hamas. However, Israel Radio reported that Hamas claimed responsibility for the launching of rockets at Israel this morning. The radio cited Hamas leader Khaled MashalQs denial of his remarks as quoted in The New York Times that his group had abandoned rocket attacks against Israel.

HaQaretz reported that senior army officers from Lebanon, Israel, and the UN will meet in two weeks to coordinate Israel's withdrawal from the northern part of the village of Ghajar, which straddles the Israeli-Lebanese border. The meeting at the Rosh Hanikra border crossing will be held on May 18. Representatives at the meeting will include Alan Le Roy, head of the Department of Peacekeeping Operations; UNIFIL commander Major-General Claudio Graziano; officers from IDF Northern Command and their Lebanese counterparts. The meeting is scheduled prior to Netanyahu's departure for Washington. The Jerusalem Post reported that FM Lieberman is seeking changes to the plan.

The Jerusalem Post reported that yesterday FM Lieberman took partial credit for blocking Iranian Mahmoud AhmadinejadQs trip to South America.

Israel Radio quoted the international Arabic newspaper Al-Quds Al-Arabi as saying that moderate Arab states -Q Jordan, Egypt, and Saudi Arabia -Q are devising a new peace plan that would be more acceptable to Israel. The London-based newspaper said that President Obama asked Arab countries to make changes to the original Arab peace plan, which would include Arab states granting citizenship to Palestinian refugees or relocating them in the future Palestinian state. Yediot reported that IsraelQs National Security Advisor Uzi Arad secretly visited Cairo last week to prepare NetanyahuQs upcoming visit.

Yediot cited a recommendation by Strategic Affairs Minister Moshe YaQalon that Israel totally disengage from Gaza Q- including stopping electricity, water, and food supply. YaQalon reportedly advocates the closing of all crossings on the Israeli side and coordination with Egypt to provide all those services and goods.

HaQaretz quoted a GOI official in Jerusalem as saying yesterday that a UN demand for financial compensation for Israeli strikes on UN facilities in Gaza in January could come to \$11 million. The remarks came in response to a UN report that criticized Israel for the attacks. The official said Israel would begin negotiations with the UN on this and other matters in the coming weeks. Yesterday UN

Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon accused Israel of lying about attacks on the facilities, including one said to have killed more than 40 people outside a school compound, and formally demanded compensation. The media reported that Israel denies that it intentionally struck the compounds. Israel also said it was forced to act against militants using these buildings and other civilian facilities for cover. Witnesses said at the time that militants fired from the area near the school that was hit. HaQaretz and The Jerusalem Post cited a statement by the Foreign Ministry, "The spirit of the report and its language are tendentious and entirely unbalanced and ignore the facts as they were presented to the commission. The commission prefers the positions of Hamas, a murderous terror organization, and by doing so misleads the world public." Yediot and other media reported that Israel had waged an intensive campaign to keep the report from coming out. Ban commended Israel for its cooperation and said there would be no further reports on the matter. He also noted in a letter attached to the report, at the Foreign Ministry's request, that the five-member panel that conducted the investigation cannot make legal findings or consider questions of legal liability, and pointed out that Israeli citizens in the south faced and continue to face indiscriminate rocket attacks by Hamas and other groups. However, the report itself did not discuss rocket fire or attacks on Israeli civilians. Israeli officials said it also failed to address the intelligence information Israel gave the committee, which they said showed that Hamas was using UN facilities as a base for terror operations.

The media reported that French FM Bernard Kouchner told FM Avigdor Lieberman in Paris yesterday that restarting Middle East peace talks is urgent and that building new Israeli settlements must end. The Jerusalem Post reported that in Rome yesterday, Lieberman called on Russia to cut ties with Hamas and Hizbullah.

The Jerusalem Post reported that yesterday Deputy State Attorney for Special Affairs Shai Nitzan told the UN Committee against Torture in Geneva that Israel has stood firm on its policy not to torture security prisoners even though the terrorist threat against it has increased.

The media reported that U.S. envoys Ambassador Jeff Feltman and Daniel Shapiro will soon visit Syria for the second time. The media reported on Ahmadinejad's visit to Syria yesterday. He and President Assad vowed to support Palestinian resistance.

The Jerusalem Post quoted Michal Zantovsky, the Czech Republic's Ambassador to Israel, as saying on Monday that the plan to upgrade Israel-EU is stuck, but not frozen. He dismissed concerns that the plan might be thwarted due to the more hard-line diplomatic stance of Israel's new government.

The Jerusalem Post cited accusations leveled by the Anti-Defamation League that the Muslim and Arab media are manipulating the swine-flu epidemic to demonize Israel and its leaders. One theme of the anti-Israel cartoons related to the swine flu ironically pictures Israeli leaders with faces of pigs, reflecting the disdain for the pig in Islamic culture, the ADL said on Monday.

The media reported that the Interior Ministry has begun proceedings to revoke the citizenship of four Israeli Arabs who left the country in the 1970s and then allegedly engaged in activities hostile to the state.

The Jerusalem Post reported that the IDF has set up a joint command center at the base in the Negev that is home to the American X-Band radar, deployed last October to bolster defenses in the face of Iranian threats.

HaQaretz quoted the periodical Intelligence Online as saying that the U.S. funded the Biological Institute at Ness Ziona to a tune of \$200 million for developing a secret lab and producing anthrax.

All media reported on an argument between Education Minister Gideon Sa'ar on one side, and Netanyahu and Finance Minister Yuval Steinitz on the other regarding possible cuts in the education budget.

All media reported that MK Eitan Cabel, the Secretary-General of the Labor Party, has decided to resign effective on Sunday. The media

debated the future of the party, which is in danger of splitting.

Yediot reported that, at a public auction, American swimming champion Michael Phelps will contribute a private swimming lesson valued at \$2,800 to fund Israeli students.

I1. Mideast:

Summary:

Diplomatic correspondent Ben Caspit wrote on page one of the popular, pluralist Maariv: QThe Americans can tell when someone is trying to pull the wool over their eyes.

The independent, left-leaning Ha'aretz editorialized: QInstead of going to Washington as someone who refuses to make peace and is attempting to thwart United States policy in the Middle East, Netanyahu needs to seek paths for cooperation and understanding with Obama.

Diplomatic correspondent Aluf Benn wrote in Ha'aretz: QIf Barack Obama wants to pry concessions out of Netanyahu, he will have to scare him with a far-reaching diplomatic plan.... If public opinion polls show widespread support for withdrawal ... [Netanyahu] may follow Begin and Sharon's lead.

The conservative, independent Jerusalem Post editorialized: QIt has been made virtually QillegalQ for Israel to defend itself. An QoccupierQ doesn't deserve that right.

Liberal columnist and anchor Ofer Shelach wrote in the popular, pluralist Maariv: QThis illusion of a decisive outcome has accompanied us for years, and we have not yet overcome it.

Former Meretz leader and former Justice Minister Yossi Beilin wrote in the independent Israel Hayom: QIt is clear in advance that the meeting between Netanyahu and Obama could be a meaningful milestone.

Block Quotes:

II. "Before the Trickle Becomes a Deluge"

Diplomatic correspondent Ben Caspit wrote on page one of the popular, pluralist Maariv (5/6): QAt some point, Benjamin Netanyahu too will realize that this is not a random scattering of drops, this is rain. The U.S. administration is irritable and short-tempered. Our friends in Washington do not have the patience to wait for the arrival of Israel's new prime minister for a first visit. They are conveying signals of agitation on a daily basis, at a growing pace, with an increasingly severe tone.... The Americans can tell when someone is trying to pull the wool over their eyes. Netanyahu is thinking and trying to generate new ideas.... He has to produce something tempting from them, with which he will be able to go to Washington in two weeks, and also return home safely. At this stage, the chances are not high.

II. "Netanyahu, Listen to Obama"

The independent, left-leaning Ha'aretz editorialized (5/6): QAs Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu prepares for his meeting in Washington with U.S. President Barack Obama, the White House is sending tough messages to Israel about its expectations.... The U.S. administration is signaling to Netanyahu that he needs to present Obama with a serious plan for a peace agreement centered around the establishment of a Palestinian state alongside Israel -- and that there is no point in wasting Obama's valuable time with futile attempts to bypass the internationally accepted two-state solution, set preconditions for negotiations or place any other obstacles in the way.... Netanyahu must heed Obama's message and see it as an opportunity to advance the peace process with the help of an active and involved American president who is politically powerful and enjoys international prestige. Instead of going to Washington as someone who refuses to make peace and is attempting to thwart United States policy in the Middle East, Netanyahu needs to seek paths for

cooperation and understanding with Obama.... Netanyahu will have to take political risks. But if he continues his evasions and excuses in an effort to keep his right-wing political partners by his side, he will be remembered by history as a prime minister who wasted his time in power.

III. "In the Corrals"

Diplomatic correspondent Aluf Benn wrote in Ha'aretz (5/6): QPeres pledged that Netanyahu wants to make history. Does that mean Netanyahu will deny his former positions, withdraw from territory and evacuate settlers? History teaches that the answer depends on two factors: Netanyahu fearing a forced agreement, and the extent to which he wants to be liked by the center and the left, who turned their backs on him during his last term. If Barack Obama wants to pry concessions out of Netanyahu, he will have to scare him with a far-reaching diplomatic plan in order to make the Prime Minister choose the cheaper option and appear to have taken the initiative himself, and not to have buckled under pressure. If public opinion polls show widespread support for withdrawal, and Netanyahu senses that he is getting close to being considered a popular premier and father of the nation, he may follow Begin and Sharon's lead. Especially if he can show that his daring moves enabled Israel to hold on to more valuable assets.

IV. QNothing Has Changed

Liberal columnist and anchor Ofer Shelach wrote in the popular, pluralist Maariv (5/6): QJust like everything else, the calm on the southern front will also be interpreted by each Israeli according to his previous views.... The problem lies in the idea that one Israeli action or another will conclusively end the Qassam rocket threat against the south. This illusion of a decisive outcome has accompanied us for years, and we have not yet overcome it.... The most reasonable interpretation of the current situation lies in a broader perspective than Qwe smacked them, and it helped.Q The entire region, from Hamas's supports in Tehran and Beirut to Cairo and Jerusalem, is waiting for the picture to become clear: The outcome of Netanyahu's visit to Washington, and more importantly, what will arise from the renewed dialogue between the U.S. with Iran and Syria. Gaza needs time to lick its wounds, and Israel has no interest of its own to heat up the situation Nothing fundamental has changed, no decisive outcome has been reached, nor could it have been.

1V. QGreat Opportunity to Bring Peace

Former Meretz leader and former Justice Minister Yossi Beilin wrote in the independent Israel Hayom (5/6): QThis is a very rare moment. It is clear in advance that the meeting between Netanyahu and Obama could be a meaningful milestone, a juncture that could lead us to the diplomatic arrangement that has not been achieved until now.... The opportunity of May 18 will not be missed if the two leaders sum it up in a detailed, practical decision to return to the negotiating table according to the 1991 Madrid principles. This refers to negotiations in parallel with Syria, Lebanon and the PLO, and an American assurance to help in implementing the Arab initiative, financing the agreements, and commanding the multi-national force in the West Bank. This will be the most important contribution to dealing with the Iranian issue and to Israel's security in the coming generations. Obama wants this, but will not impose it on Israel. Has Bibi reached this point?

VI. QDickensQ Law

The conservative, independent Jerusalem Post editorialized (5/6): QWhat a busy time it's been for those who exploit international law to gang up on Israel.... Why this obscenely inordinate investment of time, money and personnel in bashing us? Because an odd coalition -- of progressives and reactionaries -- finds itself united in the aim of forcing Israel out of the West Bank, and international law is a potent weapon in their arsenal. The progressives see Israel as QoccupyingQ only the West Bank and Gaza (though Israel pulled out of there in 2005), while the reactionaries see the QoccupationQ as extending over all of QPalestine,Q and Israel's establishment as an inexpugnable sin. This Qhuman rights coalitionQ is united in the

belief that the end -- forcing Israel out of the West Bank -- justifies the means: exploiting and distorting international law. That's why it has been made virtually illegal for Israel to defend itself. An occupier doesn't deserve that right.... The unprecedented manipulation of international law and global legal institutions to isolate and delegitimize the Jewish state is simply not fair. Moreover, it has the unintended consequence of ripping asunder the fabric of international law and morality. For the Organization of the Islamic Conference and the Arab League this may not matter much, but shouldn't it matter a great deal to those who embrace Western values?

12. U.S.-Israel Relations:

Summary:

Lenny Ben-David, a former senior Israeli diplomat in Washington and a former senior AIPAC official, wrote in the conservative, independent Jerusalem Post: Q[U.S. attacks against Israel and its allies] are part of a historic, decades-long, beneath-the-surface low-intensity war in Washington to weaken U.S.-Israel relations.

Block Quotes:

"Washington's Elders of Anti-Zion"

Lenny Ben-David, a former senior Israeli diplomat in Washington and a former senior AIPAC official, wrote in the conservative, independent Jerusalem Post (5/6): QBy no means should anyone ignore or minimize the Washington leaks and attacks against AIPAC, the American Jewish community or Israel. But it should be understood that these actions are part of a historic, decades-long, beneath-the-surface low-intensity war in Washington to weaken U.S.-Israel relations. Not much has changed since an Arab propagandist in the U.S., Muhammad Mehdi, proclaimed some 40 years ago, QThe road to the liberation of Palestine leads through Washington.Q In more than 35 years of my involvement in U.S.-Israeli relations, I have seen the ebbs and surges of various anti-Israel campaigns. Once the anti-Israel crusade was led or conducted by senator J. William Fulbright and congressman Paul Findley, assisted by Jewish anti-Zionists like Elmer Berger and the apostate Alfred Lilienthal, and supported by Arab propagandists and oil interests. In the 1960s and '70s the legislators charged that American policy in the Middle East was too pro-Israel and that Congress was corrupted. The animosity toward Israel and the American Jewish community expressed by President [George H.W. Bush] was probably shaped in part by his national security adviser Brent Scowcroft and shared by other senior staff. Scowcroft continues today to play an QeldersQ role in Washington, encouraging a change in policy toward Israel.

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